

American Indian History Timeline

Since Time Immemorial to C.E. 1450

To the Educator:

This timeline is a tool meant to help you integrate into your course content the history of the early indigenous peoples of what is now known as North and Central America. Textbooks generally omit early Native American histories and tend to define those histories through the lens of European conquest. It is my hope that you will teach your students the truth: that the indigenous civilizations of the Americas were, are, and continue to be sophisticated, significant contributors to society, whose authoritative indigenous ways of knowing has sustained such complex civilizations for millennia.

This timeline draws almost entirely from Chapter 1 of Liz Sonneborn's 2007 "updated" edition of *Chronology of American Indian History* (Infobase Publishing).¹ However, she neglects the validity and sheer volume of divergent theories of early human migration. In one fell swoop she dismisses indigenous presence explained through creation stories by validating an oft refuted migration theory:

"Although generally accepted by archaeologists and other scholars, some Indians contest the Bering Strait Theory, observing that their creation stories hold that their people were created in their traditional homelands."
(p.1)

I doubt that Judeo-Christian creation stories would have received the same treatment. Sonneborn further infers that indigenous people of the Americas have only been on this continent since the last ice age when humans "unwittingly" stumbled onto North America (p 1).

Nonetheless, indisputable evidence uncovered over the 20th and 21st centuries—well before 2007—confirms that human existence in the Americas *predates* the land bridge across the Bering Strait to which Sonneborn refers, thus acknowledging that humans likely migrated well before the last ice age and in a variety of conveyances. Their human movement was anything but "unwitting."

Omissions and misrepresentations like Sonneborn's

absolve America of any guilt or shame about how this country came to be. As Vine DeLoria, Jr. avows, denying the existence of complex ancient American Indian civilizations makes genocide inevitable, understandable, and even palatable, given that Native Americans were merely "latecomers who had barely unpacked before Columbus came knocking on the door."²

Whether teachers intend it or not, omissions of this magnitude perpetuate the myth of European racial superiority. With anti-racist practices, such as giving a more accurate and complete historical portrayal of the agency and sophistication of *all* of the societies that came before us, teachers can combat this sort of white

supremacy. Accomplishing such a feat does not require Herculean efforts. It can start small, say, with a timeline.

You can employ this timeline in any number of ways; I suggest you start with

- tucking a reference copy of it in the teachers edition of whatever ancient or world history text you use;
- teaching lessons about how deliberate exclusion of indigenous histories constitutes overt racial biases that subvert the agency of American Indian peoples today; and/or
- creating a visual classroom timeline that parallels typical Eurocentric mainstream ancient and world history.

I suspect that the more we include indigenous civilizations in the teaching and telling of ancient world history, we will promote and experience a much needed renaissance of how our students define our world and the contributors who made it possible.

Sincerely,



Shana Brown, Yakama / Muckleshoot
Teacher, Author, and Curriculum Developer

"There are immense contemporary political implications to [the Bering Strait] theory which makes it difficult for many people to surrender. Considerable residual guilt remains over the manner in which the Western Hemisphere was invaded and settled by Europeans.... People want to believe that the Western Hemisphere ... was a vacant, unexploited, fertile land[and] that American Indians were not original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere but latecomers who had barely unpacked before Columbus came knocking on the door. If Indians had arrived only a few centuries earlier, they had no real claim to land that could not be swept away by European discovery."

-Vine Deloria Jr. in Red Earth, White Lies (1995)

¹ I indicate in footnotes and brackets where I diverge from her work.

² Deloria, Vine, et al. *Spirit & Reason the Vine Deloria, Jr.* Fulcrum Pub., 1999, p 79.

[The earliest verified archaeological evidence of the settlement of North America comes from two distinct sites, one in Pennsylvania and one in Chile. Meadowcroft Rockshelter, a 35-mile drive southwest of Pittsburgh, was used continuously for centuries but was abandoned by Indians around the time of the Revolutionary War. An amateur archaeologist, Albert Miller, first discovered artifacts in a groundhog burrow there in the 1950s, but it wasn't until the 1970s that the site was properly excavated by a team from the University of Pittsburgh. What they found was an unbroken record of human habitation that may stretch back 19,000 years. Tools, bones, campsites, and personal effects were recovered. The presence of 149 species of animals was established, along with evidence of early farming of squash, corn, and beans.

The Monte Verde site in Chile, also excavated in the 1970s, is a rare find: a relatively complete village that was inundated by rising water in a peat bog shortly after it was inhabited and therefore was held in a kind of anaerobic amber. Like the Meadowcroft site, Monte Verde has been dated to as many as 19,000 years ago. Together the sites are important and do more than help us understand how and when North America was settled; they also show that there were people in North America well before the Bering land bridge formed about 10,000 years ago, throwing into dispute the theory that North America was settled primarily by Asiatic wanderers over the bridge. Indian stories about our own origins almost all claim we came into being in our native lands.

The questions archaeology is struggling to explain—When and how was North America settled? Did the first people come across the land bridge 10,000 years ago? Or on earlier land bridges formed 30,000 years ago before sea levels rose once again? From Asia by boat earlier? From northern Europe? All of the above? Were there in fact multiple origins of the human species?—are rapidly being answered by ongoing genetic research. This research suggests that prehistoric Indians share a lot of DNA with Asian populations and, surprisingly, with European populations as well. It is quite likely that Europeans migrated into far eastern Asia and mingled with the populations there and that their descendants crossed over to the New World between 30,000 and 20,000 years ago. But this is all the science of migration, not the history of peoples.

Most Indians do not see themselves as merely the first in a long series of arrivals to North America; they see themselves as indigenous. And the belief in tribal indigeneity is crucial to understanding modern Indian realities. The rhetorical stance that Indians are merely one group of travelers with no greater stake than any other clashes with Indians' cultural understanding that we have always been here and that our control over our place in this world—not to mention our control over the narrative and history of that place—has been deeply and unjustly eroded.]³

ca. 120,000 B.C.E.⁴

California site uncovers possible evidence of human activity.

ca. 48,000 – 51,000 B.C.E.⁵

“Topper Site” in present-day South Carolina uncovered stone tools dated 16,000 years old and carbon-dated burnt plant remains that were burned disputedly 50,000 – 53,000 years ago.

ca. 18,000 B.C.E.⁶

“The Kelp Highway” places humans on both sides of the land bridge 20,000 years ago.

As the massive ice sheets covering western North America retreated, the first humans arrived on the continent not only by foot but by boat, traveling down the Pacific shore and subsisting on abundant coastal resources. Supporting that idea are archaeological sites along the West Coast of North America that date back 14,000 to 15,000 years. Now our understanding of when people reached the Americas—and where they came from—is expanding dramatically. The emerging picture suggests that humans may have arrived in North America at least 20,000 years ago—some 5,000 years earlier than has been commonly believed. And new research raises the possibility of an intermediate settlement of hundreds or thousands of people who spread out over the wild lands stretching between North America and Asia.

³ Treuer, David. *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present*. Riverhead Books, 2019.

⁴ “New Evidence Puts Man In North America 50,000 Years Ago.” *ScienceDaily*, ScienceDaily, 18 Nov. 2004, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2004/11/041118104010.htm.

⁵ “New Evidence Puts Man In North America 50,000 Years Ago.” *ScienceDaily*, ScienceDaily, 18 Nov. 2004, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2004/11/041118104010.htm.

⁶ Fen Montaigne, Jennie Rothenberg Gritz. “The Story of How Humans Came to the Americas Is Constantly Evolving.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-humans-came-to-americas-180973739/.

ca. 13,000 B.C.E.⁷

Artifacts from the Cooper's Ferry site poke more holes in the traditional theory of when people arrived in the Americas.

Radiocarbon dates show that people were creating tools and butchering animals in Cooper's Ferry between 15,000 and 16,000 years ago, making Cooper's Ferry a rare and important addition to the handful of archaeological sites that are upending the traditional theory of the [peopling of the Americas](#).

ca. 12,960 – 12,565 B.C.E.⁸

Clovis infant known today as “Anzick Boy” buried with wealth of artifacts.

In 1968, [construction workers](#) came upon the remains of an infant skeleton. Those remains became known as Anzick-1 and are believed to represent a member of the Clovis people. This is the oldest and only known Clovis era burial in North America. Buried along with the infant were many stone tools and points, suggesting great significance of the infant to the Clovis people who buried him.

ca. 10,900 to 9000 B.C.E.

Large wild game species become extinct.

The mammoth, mastodon, giant sloth, and other big game species begin to die out throughout North America. Their extinction leads to the end of the Clovis cultural tradition (see entry for CA. 9200 TO 8900 B.C.E.), in which early Indians relied on hunting large game animals for their survival. The reason these game species disappeared is unclear. One prominent theory holds that they were overhunted, while another contends that changing climate conditions as the last ice age came to an end, killed off the animals' food supply, and dried up their watering areas.

ca. 9500 to 5000 B.C.E.

The Paleo-Indian tradition emerges in eastern and central North America.

The first people in North America develop the Paleo-Indian tradition. The Paleo-Indians are hunters of large wild mammals, such as mammoths, mastodons, and giant sloths. Within the tradition emerges several cultures, including the Clovis (see entry for CA. 9200 TO 8900 B.C.E.) and Folsom (see entry for CA. 8500 TO 8000 B.C.E.) cultures, which are characterized by innovations in the crafting of projectile points—the stone tips on Paleo-Indian hunting tools. The Paleo-Indian tradition will slowly fade as the climate of North America grows warmer. The rising temperatures will lead to the demise of many large game animals (see entry for CA. 10,900 TO 9000 B.C.E.) and at the same time offer early Indians new species of flora and fauna to use as food sources (see entry for CA. 8000 TO 4000 B.C.E.).⁹

ca. 9000 to 5000 B.C.E.

Early Indians in the Northwest develop the Old Cordilleran culture.

The Old Cordilleran culture emerges among the Indians in the Columbia River valley of what are now Washington and Oregon. The culture is characterized by varied strategies for obtaining food. Old Cordilleran Indians use projectile points in the shape of willow leaves for hunting small animals, make fishhooks, and craft other simple tools to prepare wild plants for eating. These peoples are most likely the ancestors of modern Indian groups, such as the Cayuse, Chinook, and Klamath.

⁷ Davis, Photograph by Loren. “15,000-Year-Old Idaho Archaeology Site Now among America's Oldest.” *National Geographic*, 30 Aug. 2019, www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/08/coopers-landing-idaho-site-americas-oldest/.

⁸ Yirka, Bob. “New Testing Method Suggests Baby Anzick-1 Was Same Age as Surrounding Clovis Artifacts.” *Phys.org*, Phys.org, 19 June 2018, phys.org/news/2018-06-method-baby-anzick-age-clovis.html.

⁹ Two of Sonneborn's entries were deleted, as they were inaccurate given new evidence as of 2018. See Footnote 2.

ca. 8500 to 8000 B.C.E.

The Folsom culture develops in the Great Plains region.

In the Great Plains and portions of the Southwest, Paleo-Indians create a cultural tradition based on bison hunting. Unlike many other large game animals (see entry for CA. 10,900 TO 9000 B.C.E.), the Folsom Indians' prey survived changing weather conditions in North America by becoming grass-eaters who feed on the grasslands that grew up on the Great Plains. Folsom hunters develop shorter, narrower projectile points than did their Clovis predecessors (see entry for CA. 9200 TO 8900 B.C.E.). With fluting on both sides, these delicate points are also much more carefully crafted, making the Folsom peoples perhaps the most skilled stone workers in all of ancient North America. In addition to stalking bison on foot, small bands of Folsom hunters often come together to join in communal hunts, in which they drive herds into natural enclosures, then slaughter the trapped animals with their spears.

ca. 8000 B.C.E.

Paleo-Indians occupy the Lindermeier site.

Early Indians of the Folsom tradition (see entry for CA. 8500 TO 8000 B.C.E.) settle in what is now Lindermeier, Colorado, which will become one of the first Paleo-Indian sites to be excavated. The people of Lindermeier spend much of their time in small groups moving from place to place hunting wild bison herds. These roaming bands range hundreds of miles from the Lindermeier, but they regularly return to the well-watered site and join in bison drives, in which, working together, they can kill large numbers of animals at one time. In addition to the distinctive Folsom projectile points, the inhabitants of Lindermeier make thin knives, drills for punching holes in wood and stone, and scrapers for preparing animal hides. Some of these are made from obsidian, a volcanic rock found more than three hundred miles away. These objects testify to the Lindermeier Indians' participation in a large network of trade.

ca. 8000 to 4000 B.C.E.

The ecology of North America is transformed by a warming climate.

The end of the last ice age causes dramatic changes in the North American continent. As the atmosphere of the earth becomes warmer, runoff from melting glaciers creates the Great Lakes, the Mississippi River, and other waterways. Trees blanket the East, grasslands sprout up in the Plains, and dry deserts cover much of the West. This transformation provides early Indians with more comfortable environments as well as new plant and animal food sources.

ca. 8000 to 1000 B.C.E.

The Archaic tradition replaces Paleo-Indian ways.

With rising temperatures, the ecology of North America changes dramatically (see entry for CA. 8000 TO 4000 B.C.E.), prompting equally significant changes in the way ancient Indians live. Throughout the continent, the hunting way of life of the Paleo-Indians (see entry for CA. 9500 TO 5000 B.C.E.) is replaced by the Archaic tradition, characterized by a greater variation in strategies for getting food. The Archaic Indians adapt to a wide variety of the new environments and learn to exploit the food sources available in each. Depending on their surroundings, some come to rely on wild plant foods, some on fishing, some on hunting, and some on a combination of these activities. These varied food-getting methods allow the Archaic Indians to protect themselves from food shortages more effectively than their Paleo-Indian ancestors could.

In the east, the Archaic tradition will be replaced by the Woodland tradition (see entry for CA. 1000 B.C.E. TO 1600 C.E.), which is distinguished by a reliance on farming, the crafting of pottery, and the construction of funerary mounds. In other areas, such as California and the Pacific Northwest, where agriculture will play a less important role [as indigenous foods were plentiful year-round, Indians of the Pacific Northwest were considered quite wealthy compared to their contemporaries], the Archaic way of life will survive up to the period of first contact with non-Indians.

ca. 7000 B.C.E.

Farming begins in Mesoamerica.

At sites in Tamaulipas, Tehuacan, and the Valley of Oaxaca in present-day Mexico, early Indians begin to experiment with cultivating plants found in the wild, such as beans, pumpkins, peppers, and gourds. At this stage, the Indians' primitive farming methods produce only a small amount of food- possibly representing as little as 5 percent of their diet. Their primary food sources remain hunting wild game and gathering wild plants. (See also entry for CA. 5000 B.C.E.)

ca. 7000 B.C.E. to C.E. 1

Cochise Desert culture emerges in the American Southwest.

Early Indians in what is now Arizona and western New Mexico develop the Cochise Desert culture. These people travel in small bands, moving from place to place and living in caves and rock shelters. Unlike the people of the Clovis (see entry for CA. 9200 TO 8900 B.C.E.) and Folsom (see entry for CA. 8500 TO 8000 B.C.E.) cultures to the east, the Cochise people rely on gathering wild plant foods rather than on hunting. The earliest Cochise sites include such tools as scrapers and milling stones for grinding seeds. In later settlements, projectile points indicate that the Cochise Indians will become more interested in hunting. Early forms of maize at these sites also suggest that they will make attempts at farming. The Cochise Desert culture may provide a base for later, more sophisticated southwestern farming cultures, such as the Mogollon (see entry for CA. 200 TO 1400) and Hohokam (see entry for CA. 400 TO 1500).

ca. 6800 B.C.E.

Anangula becomes the first settlement on the Aleutian Islands.

The village of Anangula is settled on an islet off Umnak Island in the eastern Aleutians. Its inhabitants are the first known occupants of the Aleutian Islands. Most likely a permanent settlement for fishermen and hunters of sea mammals, Anangula features large oval-shaped dwellings about 15 feet in length. Artifacts uncovered at Anangula include several sizes of simple blade tools.

ca. 6400 B.C.E. to C.E. 1200

The Koster site is occupied.

One of the best studied archaeological sites in the American Midwest, Koster (located in Greene County, Illinois) is originally a temporary camp occupied by people of the Early Archaic tradition (see entry for CA. 8000 TO 1000 B.C.E.). These first occupants hunted deer and harvested mussels and wild seeds. By 5600 B.C.E., the site is used year-round. A permanent village established there in about 3900 B.C.E. has a population of as many as 150 people, who subsist on a wide variety of wild game, fish, and plants. The largest Koster village, occupied from C.E. 800 to 1000, has about one thousand inhabitants and covers 25 acres.

ca. 5000 B.C.E.

Mexico Indians begin growing maize as a food crop.

In present-day Mexico, Indians begin selecting and planting seeds of a primitive species of maize (Indian corn). This early domestic corn may have been developed from a wild corn plant or from teosinte, a related wild grass. Each plant yields only one inch-long ear with some fifty small, edible kernels. The presence of grinding stones at ancient sites suggests that most of this maize is eaten in the form of meal. (See also entry for CA. 1500 B.C.E.)

ca. 4000 B.C.E.

Northwest Indians learn to preserve fish.

The peoples living along the Pacific coast of what is now the northwestern United States and southwestern Canada develop methods of drying and storing fish. This capability allows them to preserve the thousands of salmon and other fish caught in the spring runs for use at other times of the year. An example of early North Americans' increasing

skill at taking advantage of the natural resources in their lands, the Northwest Indians' fish-preservation technique leads them to become more reliant on fishing than on hunting.

ca. 4000 B.C.E. to C.E. 300

Hunters use Head-Smashed-In as a buffalo jump.

At the Head-Smashed-In site in what is now western Alberta, Canada, bands of early Indians come together for communal hunts, now called buffalo jumps. Popular buffalo jump sites such as Head-Smashed-In feature high cliffs. Groups of hunters initiate a buffalo stampede by screaming and chasing a frightened herd down a long drive toward the cliff and force the animals to run off the edge. Possibly annual events, successful jumps could provide hunters with hundreds of killed animals at one time. Near Head-Smashed-In is a designated area where people gather to strip the carcasses, remove the meat, and process the hides so that they can be used for clothing and shelter.

ca. 3000 to 2500 B.C.E.

The Old Copper culture emerges in the Great Lakes region.

Archaic Indians (see entry for CA. 8000 TO 1000 B.C.E.) in the Great Lakes region develop the Old Copper culture after discovering deposits of copper on the shore of Lake Superior. Using simple tools, these people are able to dig out the copper easily in chunks and sheets. They learn to shape the metal, first by chipping and hammering, later by heating the copper to make it more malleable. From this raw material the Indians create tools and weapons, such as projectile points and ax blades, as well as shiny bracelets, beads, and other ornaments. These items will become valued as luxury goods in a trade network that will develop throughout the Eastern Woodlands (see entry for CA. 1000 B.C.E. TO C.E. 200).

ca. 3000 to 1000 B.C.E.

The ancestors of the Aleut and Inuit arrive in North America.

Thousands of years after early peoples traveled from Asia to North America across the Bering land bridge (see entry for CA. 25,000 TO 12,000 B. C.), the ancestors of the Aleut and Inuit arrive in the continent. These people probably used small skin or wooden boats to cross the Bering Strait (the waterway that covered the Bering land bridge once the polar ice caps melted at the end of the last ice age). These newcomers will eventually settle throughout the Arctic and on the Aleutian Islands off the southwest coast of present-day Alaska. Because their ancestors arrived in North America far later, the modern Aleut and Inuit are more closely related to Asians than Indians are.

ca. 2500 B.C.E.

Eastern Archaic Indians begin growing crops.

Early Indians of the Eastern Woodlands begin farming gourds and squash. Seeds and knowledge of how to grow these plants were probably brought north from Mexico (see entry for CA. 7000 B.C.E.). With the ability to grow and store foods, eastern Indians no longer have to rely exclusively on hunting and gathering for their survival. Farming also marks the beginnings of tribal life, as groups band together to plant and harvest the crops, store their yields, and protect their stores from theft by other peoples.

ca. 2000 B.C.E.

The cultures of the early Aleut and Inuit begin to diverge.

About 1,000 years after they arrive in North America (see entry CA. 3000 TO 1000 B.C.E.), the ancestors of the modern Aleut and Inuit develop distinct culture. The early Aleut settle the 1,400-mile Aleutian Island chain off the coast of what is now Alaska. The Aleutian environment is warmer, windier, and wetter than that of the frozen Arctic of the Inuit. The Aleut share with Inuit an expertise in hunting, but their village life, in which people are ranked by social position and wealth, more closely resembles that of the Indians of the northwest coast of the present-day United States.

ca. 2000 to 1000 B.C.E.

Southwestern Indians begin growing maize.

Early Indians in the southwest begin to plant fields of maize, which was first domesticated in Mexico at least three millennia earlier (see entry for CA. 5000 B.C.E.). Initially, maize supplements food obtained by hunting and gathering. Southwestern Indians soon become more dependent on the crop as they start growing a hybrid species, crossed with wild grass (see entry for CA. 1500 B.C.E.). The new species, which produces far larger ears with more rows of kernels, spreads quickly through the region.

Over time the southwestern Indians develop newer, even harder breeds that grow well with little moisture. They also learn to divert streams to water their crops. By about C.E. 1, an expanding population makes agriculture a more attractive food strategy than hunting and gathering. Maize farming, therefore, transforms the Indians' way of life. Instead of living in small, mobile bands, they begin to settle in larger, more permanent villages.

ca. 1800 to 500 B.C.E.

Poverty Point is settled in Louisiana.

Indians begin building a massive settlement at Poverty Point, overlooking the floodplain of the Mississippi River, in what is now northeastern Louisiana. The habitation area covers nearly 500 acres and includes, at its height, as many as 600 dwellings occupied by some 5,000 people. Located near the confluence of six rivers, the Poverty Point site serves as a major trading center for three hundred years. Exotic materials such as copper, argillite, and quartz—some from as far away as the Great Lakes region—are traded there.

Poverty Point also features great earthworks. Most prominent are mounds about 82 feet wide and nine feet tall that form six concentric semicircles. The massive construction will be the largest in North America for the next thousand years. Why the mounds were built and how they were used remains a mystery.

ca. 1500 B.C.E.

Mexican farmers develop an improved species of maize.

By crossing primitive species of maize (see entry for CA. 5000 B.C.E.) with wild grass plants, Mexican Indians create a hybrid plant that is far superior as a food source. The new species offers larger ears, covered with protective husks, and with many more kernels than earlier forms of maize. Exported from Mexico, this heartier and more productive plant will allow Indian groups to the north to adopt settled, largely agricultural ways of life (see entry for CA. 2000 TO 1000 B.C.E.).

1500 BCE to C.E. 300

The Olmec establish the first great civilization in Mesoamerica.

Called the "mother civilization" because of its great influence on the cultures of later Mesoamerican people, the Olmec civilization emerges in the humid lands along the Gulf coast in what is now southern Mexico. The rich wild-plant resources in the region allow the Olmec population to grow and eventually spread throughout Mesoamerica.

The Olmec build large urban areas such as San Lorenzo and La Venta, where people gather to trade and attend religious ceremonies. These centers feature large public buildings and pyramids, constructed by great teams of workers. Commoners also farm nearby fields, and craftsmen produce figurines, ceremonial paraphernalia, and ornaments for the elite. Artisans create monumental sculptures, such as the gigantic human heads excavated at the San Lorenzo site. Measuring as tall as five feet and weighing as much as 20 tons, these basalt sculptures may be portraits of the Olmec's rulers.

The Olmec culture largely disappears by 300 CE, but through the Maya (see entry for ca. 200 to 1500), Toltec (see entry for ca. 900 to 1200), and Aztec (see entry for ca. 1430 to 1517) civilizations many elements of its social, religious, military, and artistic traditions will survive for more than a millennium.

ca. 1000 B.C.E. to C.E. 200

Adena culture evolves in the Ohio River valley.

The Adena culture emerges in small settlements in what is now southern Ohio and parts of present-day West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Indiana. The inhabitants farm a few crops—including pumpkins, gourds, and tobacco—but they are primarily hunters and gatherers. In their plentiful environment, they can rely on wild plants and animals for food and still maintain a relatively sedentary existence.

The most distinctive characteristic of Adena sites are clusters of burial mounds. Early mounds include ridges formed along natural hills and free-standing earthworks in the shapes of circles, squares, and pentagons. The Adena people construct between 300 to 500 mounds. The largest, such as the Great Serpent Mound (see entry for 200 B.C.E. TO C.E. 400), require the cooperative labor of many people. That some burial mounds are much larger than others also indicates that some Adena have higher status than others.

The contents of the mounds provide evidence that the structures were built for religious rather than defensive purposes. Used for burials of corpses or cremated remains, many contain luxury goods for the dead to take with them to the afterlife. These goods include neck ornaments, slate pipes for smoking tobacco, and stone tablets carved with designs and animal shapes that may have been used as stamps for body tattooing. Some goods also suggest that the Adena are participants in a long-distance trade network. A number of mounds, for instance, hold bracelets, rings, and axes that Adena artisans craft from copper imported from present-day Michigan (see entry for ca. 3000 to 2500 BCE). The Adena culture will begin to disappear in the first century CE and will gradually be displaced by the people of the Hopewell tradition (see entry for ca. 200 BCE to 400 CE).

ca. 1000 B.C.E. to C.E. 1600

The Woodland tradition spreads through eastern North America.

With the domestication of wild plants native to eastern North America, the Woodland cultural tradition grows up among the Indians of the region. Accompanying the development of agriculture is the manufacture of pottery and the construction of funerary mounds. The Woodland tradition encompasses several distinct cultures, including the Adena (see entry for CA. 1000 B.C.E. TO C.E. 200), Hopewell (see entry for CA. 200 B.C.E. TO C.E. 400), and Mississippian (see entry for CA. 700 TO 1550).

ca. 800 B.C.E. to C.E. 1300

Eastern Canada sees the rise of Dorset culture.

The peoples of present-day eastern Canada and Greenland develop the Dorset culture, which is based on the hunting of marine mammals, such as seals and walruses, using bows and arrows. Their settlements feature subterranean houses, and the Dorset people may also construct igloo-like dwellings from blocks of ice. They also make small stone lamps, construct kayaks, and craft unique animal and human figures from bone and ivory, which they may use as charms to bring them luck on the hunt.

The Dorset culture begins to fade in importance in the 11th century with the arrival of people of the Thule culture in the region (see entry for CA. 900 TO 1600). The Thule's tools and weapons are more sophisticated and better suited to helping humans survive in this challenging environment.

ca. 750 B.C.E.

The ancient village č̣ixʷícən (ch-WHEET-son), was uncovered in 2003 at the base of Ediz Hook in Port Angeles, Washington.

The largest pre-European contact village site in Washington State, the village of Tse-whit-zen flourished for over 2,700 years and was one of many in the Klallam territory, which stretched from the Hoko River on the Strait of Juan de Fuca into the Hood Canal. The village site dates back to 750 B.C. — approximately the same time Rome was founded. The Department of Transportation, who uncovered the site, met with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. Together they came up with a plan to remove the artifacts and human remains so that construction could continue.

ca. 500 B.C.E.

Southwestern farmers begin growing beans.

Agricultural communities in what is now the American Southwest learn to farm beans, which soon become staples. Beans prove to be a particularly healthful food, because they contain an amino acid that allows early Indians to digest more effectively the protein found in maize, their earlier staple crop (see entry for CA. 2000 to 1000 B.C.E.). Beans also help farmers by returning nitrogen to soil that corn plants deplete, thus keeping their fields fertile year after year.

ca. 500 B.C.E. to C.E. 900

The Zapotec culture emerges at Monte Alban.

From the mountaintop urban center of Monte Alban, the Zapotec people extend influence over much of the present-day state of Oaxaca. The Zapotec are ruled by divine kings. Their military conquests are recorded in carvings known as the Danzante ("dancers") on stone tablets, depicting the naked bodies of slain and mutilated captives. Like other Mesoamerican political and ceremonial centers, Monte Alban features temples and ball courts arranged around a great plaza. Perhaps as a result of the decline of Teotihuacan (see entry for CA. 200 B.C.E. TO C.E. 750), whose leaders may have paid tribute to those of Monte Alban, the Zapotec ruler loses control of the surrounding area in about C.E. 900. As centralized control diminishes, the Zapotec people begin living in small independent settlements until they fall prey to, first, invading Aztec (see entry for CA. 1430 TO 1521) in the late 1400s, then Spanish armies in the early 1500s.

ca. 200 B.C.E. to C.E. 400

The Great Serpent Mound is constructed.

The largest effigy mound in North America, the Great Serpent Mound, is constructed in what is now Adams County, Ohio, by Indians of the Adena (see entry CA. 1000 B.C.E. TO C.E. 200) or Hopewell (see entry for CA. 200 B.C.E. TO A. D. 400) tradition. The serpent is about five feet tall, 20 feet wide, and nearly a mile long. From the air, it looks like a gigantic uncoiling snake with its mouth open, holding an oval shape that may represent an egg or a celestial body. Although the meaning the serpent mound held for its builders is unclear, the serpent is common in the oral traditions of the Indians of the region.

The Hopewell culture develops throughout the Midwest.

The Hopewell cultural tradition emerges in the Ohio River valley and gradually spreads throughout the Midwest, stretching south to the Gulf of Mexico and north to the Great Lakes. This culture has much in common with the Adena tradition (see entry for CA. 1000 B.C.E. TO C.E. 200), which predated it in what is now Ohio. Like the Adena, the Hopewell obtain food by hunting and gathering supplemented with farming. Hopewell farmers, however, eventually add a new crop—maize (Indian corn)—that give them a more secure food supply and allow their population to grow.

The Hopewell live in small villages, often clustered around large ceremonial centers. The settlements feature burial mounds that are far larger than those constructed by the Adena. These mounds cover crypts that serve as burial chambers for the social and political elite. Buried with corpses or their cremated remains are elaborate goods, such as copper breastplates and ear ornaments, pipes carved in animal shapes, pearl bead necklaces, painted fabrics, and human and animal shapes crafted from flat copper and mica sheets. Many of the objects are made from raw materials obtained through trade. Traders bring to the ceremonial centers materials from as far west as the Rockies, as far east as the Atlantic coast as far north as present-day Canada, and as far south as what is now Florida. At the centers, craftspeople make the trade items into luxury goods, many of which are exported to outlying areas under Hopewell influence.

The cause of the Hopewell's decline in the fourth century is unclear. Changing climactic conditions may have diminished their wild food resources, or the introduction of the bow and arrow may have led to increased warfare. Other theories hold that the cultivation of corn may have destroyed the Hopewell culture. Corn, as a reliable food source, may have eliminated the need for the Hopewell trade network. It may also have encouraged the Hopewell to abandon their ceremonial centers for less densely populated settlements, where widespread famine was far less likely if a particular year's corn crop was small.

ca. 200 B.C.E. to C.E. 750

The Basketmaker tradition marks the first phase of Anasazi culture.

The Anasazi tradition emerges in the Four Corners area of what is now Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado, with the establishment of small villages of underground pit houses. These early Anasazi farm squash and maize but obtain most of their food by hunting and gathering. Their villages gradually become larger and more numerous. Because they use woven baskets rather than pottery to store their food, their culture will be named the Basketmaker tradition by archaeologists. After 500, in the final phase of the Basketmaker culture, the Indians come to rely on agriculture as their primary food source. (See also entry for CA. 750 TO 1400.)

Teotihuacán becomes Mesoamerica's first great urban center.

Teotihuacán emerges as the largest urban center in Mesoamerica before the rise of the Aztec Empire (see entry for CA. 1430 TO 1521). Located about 30 miles to the northeast of present-day Mexico City, Teotihuacán functions as an administrative, commercial, and ceremonial center. At its height (about C.E. 600) it covers more than eight square miles, making it larger than ancient Rome. Its population numbers between 125,000 and 200,000.

Teotihuacan's center is laid out on an enormous grid and features great open plazas, pyramids, and palaces aligned along a road a mile and a half long known as the Street of the Dead. On its east side is the enormous Pyramid of the Sun. Built in about C.E. 125, it towers over the city, with a height of more than 200 feet.

While the houses of the leaders and noble class of Teotihuacan are located in the city center, ordinary people live in suburbs that spread out over 20 square miles. Most of these Teotihuacanos labor in the surrounding farms that feed the city's large population area. The outlying area also includes special communities for foreign traders and more than 500 artisans' workshops. Many of these craftspeople produce projectile points, knives, scrapers, and figurines from obsidian—a shiny, black volcanic glass. The export of these obsidian objects to peoples throughout Mesoamerica accounts for much of Teotihuacan's wealth.

ca. 200

Southwestern Indians begin making pottery

The development of pottery making allows southwestern Indians to make better use of the foods they farm. Ceramic pots are effective cooking vessels that allow them to boil dried corn and beans easily over an open fire. They are also excellent containers for storing these crops, allowing little spoilage. The increased use of pottery coincides with a more settled way of life, as pots are too heavy and fragile for hunters and gatherers to move easily from place to place.

ca. 200 to 1400

The Mogollon culture emerges in what is now Arizona and New Mexico.

In the mountainous area of present-day east-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico, the Mogollon cultural tradition develops. Early Mogollon sites feature multifamily villages of subterranean pithouses. Although the inhabitants farm, most of their food comes from hunting and gathering. Farming grows in importance as villages become larger. In comparison with the Hohokam (see entry for CA. 400 TO 1500) to the southeast, the Mogollon inhabit a relatively wet environment and therefore do not need to irrigate their lands as the Hohokam do.

By the late 10th century, the Mogollon peoples abandon their pithouses for aboveground adobe structures (see entry for CA. 700) similar to modern-day pueblos. At the same time, they begin to construct underground ceremonial chambers known as kivas. The largest-called Great Kivas—measure more than 30 feet in diameter. Mogollon pottery also becomes more sophisticated. In addition to producing brown ceramic vessels for cooking and storage, the Mogollon people of the Mimbres Valley (see entry for ca. 1000 to 1130) create black-on-white decorated pottery for ceremonial use. The Mogollon tradition dies out before the arrival of non-Indians in the region, but these Indians are sometimes identified as the ancestors of the present-day Pueblo groups.

ca. 300 to 1500

The Maya civilization dominates southern Mexico.

The Maya culture emerges in what is now southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize, beginning in about 300. Probably highly influenced by the culture of the Olmec (see entry for 1500 B.C.E. to C.E. 300), the Maya reach their height between 600 and 900, an era known as the Classic Period. At this time, there are more than one hundred Maya urban centers, each with its own ruler. These centers possibly frequently vie for supremacy by fighting one another.

Worshipping several gods, the Classic Maya hold as a central tenet that time is cyclical and that knowledge of the past can allow one to predict the future: Their religious beliefs, therefore, galvanize their study of timekeeping and astronomy. The complex calendar they develop is more accurate than the Roman calendar used today. They also make great strides in mathematics and create a system of hieroglyphic writing. Using this writing system, they record their history in codices, on stela, and later in books namely *the Popul Vuh* (see entry for 1554), the *Books of Chilam Balam*, and the *Annals of the Cakchiquels*.

The Maya also excel in architecture and art. They build great palaces and tall pyramids from cut stone. The city of Tikal, for instance, features six pyramids among the 3,000 structures used by a population as large as 60,000. Their artists, often specializing in one craft, produce beautiful murals, masks, stone and wood carvings, feathered clothing, and jewelry decorated with jade, pearl, and shell.

By 900, the Maya civilization in the southern lowlands declines, possibly because of epidemic disease, exhaustion of natural resources, or a change in climate that adversely affects agricultural yields. The Maya continue to flourish in Yucatan until the beginning of the 16th century. Already weakened by smallpox, ecological changes, or civil war, the Yucatan Maya are subjugated by the Spanish after a series of invasions (see entries for 1523 and for 1546). Although most of their culture has disappeared, Maya dialects are still spoken by more than 3 million descendants of the Classic and Postclassic Maya. (See also entry for 987.)

ca. 400 to 1300

The Fremont tradition develops in present-day Utah.

In what is now Utah and portions of Nevada, Colorado, and Idaho, the Fremont culture emerges. The Fremont peoples live in scattered villages, where they adopt several traits of Anasazi culture (see entries for CA. 200 B.C.E., C.E. 750, and for CA. 750 TO 1400), such as building subterranean pit houses, making pottery, and cultivating maize. The ways of life among these people vary widely according to the natural resources available. Some live in sedentary farming communities; others travel in small groups in search of wild game and plants; still others alternate between these food-getting strategies. The Fremont culture is also characterized by anthropomorphic clay figurines and rock paintings that suggest shared religious beliefs. The tradition fades in the 13th century, probably because of drought conditions that make farming difficult and because of competition from other groups who have moved onto their lands.

ca. 400 to 1500

The Hohokam culture develops in present-day Arizona.

In the desert area of what is now southern Arizona and northern Mexico, the Hohokam tradition evolves and dominates the region for more than one thousand years. In the culture's earliest years, villages are no more than clusters of several dwellings. Over time, at such sites as Snaketown (see entry for CA. 975 TO 1150), larger settlements grow up with populations exceeding five hundred. Unlike the contemporaneous Anasazi settlements in Chaco Canyon (see entry for CA. 900 TO 1150), however, these villages are probably economically and politically independent of one another.

Hohokam villages are characterized by platform mounds and large ball courts, both of which may be used for rituals. The ball courts may also function as open-air markets, where traders from surrounding settlements gather. Parrot bones, shells, turquoise, and other exotic items from faraway areas later found at Hohokam sites are evidence that the Hohokam people are part of a vast trade network.

The Hohokam obtain most of their food by farming corn, beans, and squash. To grow these crops in their dry lands, the Hohokam become pioneers in irrigation technology. Beginning in about 800, they build an enormous network of canals to carry water from nearby rivers into their fields. As their farming methods improve, they start to grow tobacco and cotton, in addition to their staple food crops. The Hohokam also supplement their food supply by gathering

mesquite beans and cactus fruit and by hunting deer and rabbits.

After 1100, the Hohokam tradition begins to decline, possibly because of a series of floods or invasions by outsiders. By 1500, the culture has disappeared, although the present-day Akimel O'odham (formerly known as the Pima) may be the Hohokam's direct descendants.

ca. 500

The bow and arrow are used throughout North America.

Possibly used by Arctic people as early as 2000 B.C.E., the bow and arrow become widely adopted by Indians across the North American continent. The innovation proves to be a much more effective hunting tool than the atlatl, or spear thrower. In addition to being easier to make and lighter to carry, arrows shot from bows allow hunters to fell their prey at a greater distance. Bows can also be reloaded quickly, so that a skilled hunter can shoot several arrows at a single target.

ca. 600 to 1500

The Mixtec culture emerges in Mesoamerica.

Living in the present-day Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Puebla, the Mixtec people develop a distinct culture. Unlike such later Mesoamerican peoples as the Aztec (see entry for CA. 1430 TO 1521), they do not establish a united empire administered from a capital city but instead occupy many separate states, each with its own political leaders. These states, ruled by local dynasties, are socially stratified, with commoners laboring for the benefit of the noble and royal classes. They build the temples, ball courts, and royal residences that characterize Mixtec urban centers. Artisans produce a wide array of luxury goods—such as gold and silver necklaces and ear and nose ornaments—for the Mixtec elite and for trade with Indians in other areas. The Mixtec also develop a picture writing system, which they use to make genealogical records and take down historical and religious information.

In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, most of the Mixtec states are overrun by either Aztec invaders or Spanish conquistadors. Approximately a quarter of a million direct descendants of the ancient Mixtec still live in Mexico.

ca. 700

Southwestern Indians begin building houses from adobe.

Indians in the Southwest abandon their pithouses and begin constructing multiroomed, above-ground dwellings from adobe (sun-dried clay, often mixed with straw). The shift is a response to their increasing dependence on corn and bean crops to feed a growing population; the pithouses are too small for storing and preparing these foods. Their new adobe houses are not only larger but also can easily be increased in size by adding more rooms as needed. The clay also provides excellent insulation, making these dwellings comfortable during both hot summers and cool winters.

ca. 700 to 1550

The Mississippian culture extends over the central United States.

The Mississippian Indian culture evolves in what is now the central United States, stretching north to south from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico and east to west from the Appalachians to the eastern Plains. The largest Mississippian settlements are centered along the Mississippi River and its major tributaries. At the culture's greatest extent, the Mississippian population numbers in the millions.

The Mississippians construct urban areas that serve as ceremonial and trade centers. The largest is Cahokia (see entry for CA. 800 TO 1400), which at its height has at least 20,000 residents. In these centers the Mississippian construct enormous platform mounds. These mounds are rectangular at the base and topped with a series of flat tiers. On their flat tops rest houses for hereditary leaders. These houses are lavishly furnished with walls covered with deer skins, and their roofs are decorated with precious shells and pearls. When a leader dies, his house is destroyed and in its place is built a new tier of earth which becomes the foundation of the next leader's dwelling.

The Mississippian urban centers rely on goods obtained by traders who travel area rivers by canoe to outlying settlements. This far-reaching trade network brings to the centers such exotic items as copper from the Great Lakes region, mica from the Appalachian Mountains, and sharks' teeth and barracuda jaws from the Gulf of Mexico.

The Mississippians depend on corn, beans, and squash, which are farmed mostly by women. Unlike earlier mound-building cultures (see entries for CA. 200 TO 1400 and for CA. 400 TO 1500), they use a new tool-the stone-bladed hoe-to make their fieldwork easier. Mississippian men employ another innovation-the bow and arrow (see entry for CA. 500)-to hunt deer and other animals for meat.

Although some sites are abandoned earlier the Mississippian culture survives into the historic area. Soldiers under Hernando de Soto (see entry for 1539) will leave records of their large urban centers in the Mississippi River valley. Contact with non-Indians, however, destroys the remaining centers, whose populations thereafter fall victim to repeated epidemics of infectious European diseases to which the Indians have no natural immunity.

ca. 750

Teotihuacan is destroyed.

Teotihuacan, the greatest pre-Aztec urban center in Mesoamerica (see entry for CA. 200 B.C.E. TO C.E. 750), is looted and burned. Its ravagers are either invaders from outside of the city (perhaps the Toltec; see entry for CA. 900 TO 1200) or city residents in revolt. Many of the pyramids that rose above Teotihuacan's central plaza are destroyed in the attack. The ruins of the city will be revered by the Aztec (see entry for CA. 1430 TO 1521), who enter the region in the 14th century. They will give Teotihuacan its name, which means "the City of the Gods" in Nahuatl, the Aztec language.

ca. 750 to 1400

Anasazi culture enters the Pueblo Period.

The Anasazi move from the Basketmaker Period (see entry for CA. 200 B.C.E. TO C.E. 750) to the Pueblo Period with the introduction of an innovation in architecture-the widespread use of aboveground dwellings made from adobe (clay) bricks or from stone mortared with adobe (see entry for CA. 500). The new housing style gives the Anasazi more space for storing and milling corn, a food source that becomes more important as their population increases. They retain a form of their old underground pithouses but use these structures-known as kivas-exclusively for ceremonies.

Starting in about 1000, Anasazi villages grow far larger. Some Anasazi settlements house as many as 10,000 people, and their total population numbers as high as one hundred thousand. The many roads connecting the villages allow the Anasazi to enjoy a vast trade network centered on the Chaco Canyon (see entry for CA. 900 TO 1150).

These large villages are abandoned by the Anasazi beginning in the 14th century. They may have relocated to smaller settlements after suffering droughts that made farming enough food for their large populations impossible. The Anasazi may also have been driven from their lands by less sophisticated peoples, who then adopted some of their ways. The remnants of the Anasazi will become the ancestors of modern Pueblos groups, such as the Hopi and the Zuni. (See also entry for CA. 1100 TO 1200.)

ca. 875 to 1500

The Patayan culture develops in western Arizona

South of the Grand Canyon, the Patayan culture (also known as the Hakataya culture) emerges along the Colorado River in what is now western Arizona. Like the Hohokam to the east (see entry for CA. 400 TO 1500), the Patayan people rely on farming for their survival, although they supplement their food supply with hunting and gathering. Other cultural traits include building aboveground brush dwellings and making pottery and baskets. The Patayan (the Yuman word for "old people") may be the ancestors of Yuman-speaking groups such as the Quechan and the Mojave.

ca. 900 to 1150

The "Chaco Phenomenon" evolves in the San Juan Basin.

Over a 25,000-square-mile area in the San Juan Basin in what is now northern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado, the Anasazi (see entries for CA. 200 B.C.E. TO C.E. 750 and for CA. 750 TO 1400) begin to live in large pueblos. Most include 10 to 20 rooms, though nine enormous pueblos in the basin grow to hundreds of rooms in size. Archaeologists will refer to this development as the Chaco Phenomenon, after the Chaco Canyon, which serves as the

trade, administrative, and possibly ritual center for the outlying pueblos. The settlements are connected by more than 250 miles of roads, including elaborate stairways and ramps to help travelers make their way through difficult terrain. This travel network permits people from scattered pueblos to trade food and goods with one another. The Chaco Phenomenon therefore allows the dry desert basin to sustain a much larger population than it could have if the Indians had been confined to isolated farming settlements.

The area suffers a sustained drought after 1130, and the Chaco system begins to decline. By this time, it may have grown too large to remain effective and thus would have collapsed even if rainfall had remained at normal levels. The people of the canyon slowly scatter—some forming new, smaller settlements, others probably abandoning and returning to hunting and gathering food.

ca. 900 to 1200

The Toltec establish an empire in central Mexico.

United under the leader Mixcoatl, the warlike Toltec overwhelm the peoples of present-day central Mexico. There, Mixcoatl's son Topilzin founds a large empire of states centered around the Toltec capital of Tula. Tula spreads over an area of more than five square miles and has a population in the tens of thousands. The region includes a swampland that provides the Toltec with basketry materials and gives Tula its original name—Tollan, meaning "place of the reeds."

The Toltec become expert temple pyramid builders as well as craftspeople, known best for their *chacmools*—large, stone sculptures of warriors lying on their backs that may have held the hearts of human sacrifices. Under Topilzin, the Toltec also develop the cult of Quetzalcóatl, a mythic feathered serpent whose name Topilzin adopts. According to Toltec legend, Quetzalcóatl, driven out of Tula by the god Tezcatlipoca, goes to live in the east but vows one day to return to reclaim his throne. Toltec art and the Quetzalcóatl cult will have a great influence on the Maya (see entries for CA. 300 TO 1500 and for 987) and the Aztec (see entry for CA. 1430 TO 1521)—the latter of whom will succeed the Toltec as the dominant people of the region.

ca. 900 to 1500

The Etowah village site is occupied.

In what is now northwestern Georgia near the present-day city of Rome, Etowah grows into one of the largest Mississippian ceremonial centers (see entry for CA. 750 TO 1550). The village covers 52 acres and features two large plazas surrounded by seven mounds, three of which are topped with buildings serving as temples or houses for Etowah's leaders. Smaller mounds containing artifacts associated with the religious beliefs of the Southern Cult (see entry for CA. 1100 TO 1300) are used as burial sites for elite villagers. The village is surrounded by a palisade and a moat. At its height, Etowah is the center of a chiefdom that controls a large area, including what is now northern Georgia and Alabama, eastern Tennessee, and western North and South Carolina. Its decline before the historic period is probably due to warfare, perhaps with the Mississippian chiefdom centered at the Moundville site in present-day Alabama.

ca. 900 to 1600

Thule culture spreads across northern Canada.

Along the Arctic coast of present-day northern Alaska, groups of Native people begin to rely on whaling as a primary source of food. The result is the Thule culture, which quickly expands eastward throughout what is now northern Canada, eventually spreading all the way to Greenland.

The rapid adoption of the Thule culture is attributed to the wide array of vessels and tools the Thule people develop to help them survive in the frozen Arctic. Possibly the most important innovation is the umiak, a large, open skin boat that can carry teams of hunters on whaling expeditions. The Thule also create sophisticated harpoons and spears, which they use to hunt whales, walrus, seals, caribou, polar bears, and smaller mammals. They live in snow houses heated with whale oil lamps in the winter, and in skin tents in the summer. As transportation, they use sleds drawn by packs of domesticated dogs. Thule artisans also make many different types of implements and ornaments from stone, bone, ivory, sinew, and copper. Although Thule culture will fade in the 15th century, many elements of the tradition will survive in the modern Inuit way of life.

ca. 975 to 1150

The Hohokan site of Snaketown is occupied.

Located at the confluence of the Gila and Salt Rivers near what is now Phoenix, Arizona, Snake-town-the largest Hohokam settlement (see entry for CA. 400 TO 1500)-grows to sustain a population of as many as 600. The people live in more than 100 dwellings circling a central plaza, where ceremonial events are held. The site also features two enormous ball courts, which serve as arenas for a game played with a small ball made from rubber possibly imported from Mexico.

987

Maya legend records the arrival of Quetzalcoatl.

According to Maya chronicles, a man named Quetzalcóatl (Kukulcan, in the Maya language) arrives on the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula and becomes a leader among the Yucatan Maya (see entry for CA. 300 TO 1500). The legend recalls the Toltec cult of Quetzalcoatl, which holds that this god traveled east after being driven from the Toltec capital of Tula by a supernatural rival (see entry for CA. 900 TO 1200). A relationship between the Yucatan Maya and the Toltec is borne out by the ruins of Chichén Itzá, a great urban center whose structures combine aspects of both of these cultures.

ca. 1000

The Norse begin trading with the indigenous people of Vinland.

According to Norse sagas of the 12th and 13th centuries, Norse explorer Leif Eriksson purchases a boat from a sailor named Bjarni Herjolfsson, who claims that when blown off coast traveling west from Greenland he sighted the coast of a large landmass. In Herjolfsson's boat, Eriksson sets off to find it. He and his crew explore two islands; one they call Helluland, and another they name Markland. Scholars later identify them as Baffin Island and Labrador, respectively. The Norsemen also come upon a land with rich soil, plentiful game and fish, and large patches of wild grapevines. After this last feature, the explorers dub the region Vinland, which is most often identified with Newfoundland (see entry for 1960).

Eriksson's party remains in Vinland for nearly a year. There they build settlements and come in contact with the indigenous people of the area-most likely either Inuit or Beothuk-whom the Norsemen call Skraelings (literally "wretches"). The Skraelings give the travelers animal pelts and ivory in exchange for metal tools and wool. Other encounters are less fruitful: on several occasions, the Norsemen kill Skraelings. Eriksson's crew will abandon the settlement, possibly due to indigenous resistance to their acts of violence. (See also entry for CA. 1007.)

ca. 1000 to 1130

The Mimbres begin creating painted pottery.

The Mogollon (see entry for CA. 200 TO 1400) of Mimbres Valley in what is now southwestern New Mexico begin crafting decorative bowls that are likely used in ceremonies. Made by Mimbres women, their unique pots are painted with geometric designs and human, animal, and mythological figures. The vessels are often placed in graves, over the head of the corpse. Before a corpse is entombed, a hole is punched into the base of the pot to "kill" it ritually and allow its spirit to travel to the after-world. In the 20th century, the beautiful Mimbres ceramics will be treasured by art collectors.

ca. 1007

Norsemen kill eight "Skraelings."

As recorded in Norse sagas, Thorvald Eriksson, the brother of Leif Eriksson (see entry for CA. 1000), and a crew of 35 are exploring the coast of the Atlantic Ocean when they spy on the beach nine indigenous people, whom the Norse refer to as Skraelings. Without provocation, the Norsemen attack. All of the Skraelings are killed, except for one who manages to escape by canoe. Another party of Skraelings avenge the murders by shooting arrows at the invader's ship. Eriksson is killed in the attack, and his crew returns to Greenland.

ca. 1100

Sinagua culture begins to flourish.

The Sinagua culture develops in the Verde Valley of what is now central Arizona after a volcano spreads ash over their lands. The ash improves the fertility of the soil, allowing the Sinagua to harvest large crops for the next 200 years. Located north of the Hohokam (see entry for CA. 400 TO 1500) and south of the Anasazi (see entry for CA. 750 TO 1400), the Sinagua culture adopts elements of these traditions. Like the Anasazi, for instance, the Sinagua build cliff dwellings, some of which will survive at Walnut Canyon National Monument, near present-day Flagstaff.

ca. 1100 to 1200

The Anasazi construct cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde.

In what is now southwestern Colorado, the Anasazi (see entry for CA. 750 TO 1400) at Mesa Verde construct adobe dwellings of 10 to several hundred rooms in alcoves in canyon walls. The largest of these cliff dwellings is Cliff Palace, which includes 220 rooms. To reach the buildings, inhabitants have to make a difficult and steep climb using handholds and footholds carved into the cliffs. Their inaccessibility suggests that the cliff dwellings are meant to provide protection from the residents' enemies as well as from inclement weather.

ca. 1100 to 1300

The Southern Cult emerges among the Mississippians.

The people of the Mississippian tradition (see entry for CA. 700 TO 1550) in the modern southeastern United States create artifacts that reflect a set of religious beliefs later termed the Southern Cult. Common motifs of Southern Cult artifacts include skulls, warriors holding axes, severed heads, weeping eyes, and hands with eyes in their palms. These are most often engraved into shell but also carved into wood and stone and embossed on sheets of copper. The gruesome imagery suggests that the Southern Cult is related to war and possibly human sacrifice. Many of the materials used to craft these objects also indicate that the Southern Cult Mississippian are involved in a far-reaching trade network. Copper axes, for instance, are made from metal mined in the Great Lakes region.

ca. 1150

The Anasazi establish Oraibi.

In what is now northeastern Arizona, the Anasazi (see entry for CA. 750 TO 1400) found the village of Oraibi. By the late 13th century, the settlement will have a population of as many as 1,000. It will later be occupied by the Hopi, descendants of the Anasazi, and become the longest continually occupied settlement in the present-day United States. (See also entry for SEPTEMBER 9, 1906 [not in this document].)

ca. 1300 to 1400

Migrants to Hohokam territory develop the Salado culture.

As the Sinagua culture (see entry for CA. 1100) comes to an end, a group of Sinagua people travel south and settle among the Hohokam (see entry for CA. 400 TO 1500) in the Gila River valley. The culture that evolves among these migrants as they take on Hohokam traits will become known as the Salado tradition.

The Salado people are probably responsible for

introducing a new form of architecture among the Hohokam. One example is the four-story Great House at Casa Grande. Accustomed to building structures from stone, the Salado Indians have difficulty working with the adobe bricks used by the Hohokam. Perhaps unsure about the stability of the material, they fill the centers of the bottom floors with bricks to ensure the buildings will not collapse.

ca. 1325

The early Aztec found Tenochtitlan.

The Mexica, a tribe of nomadic hunters who will later become known as the Aztec (see entry for CA. 1430 TO 1521), arrive in Central Mexico, where they encounter more powerful groups that demand tribute. To escape these groups, the early Aztec found a settlement on a muddy island in the center of what is now Lake Texcoco. According to Aztec legend, the god Huitzilopochtli leads them to this place (today the site of Mexico City), where they find an eagle seated on cactus with a serpent in its beak. This image now appears on the flag of Mexico. The legend also survives in the name Tenochtitlan, meaning "place of the cactus" in Nahuatl, the Aztec language.

ca. 1400

The Peacemaker and Hiawatha form the Iroquois Confederacy.

According to Iroquois oral tradition, a Huron prophet known as the Peacemaker advocates the end of warfare associated with the blood feud—a custom that requires the family of a victim of violence to avenge the crime by attacking members of the perpetrator's family. The message of peace is embraced by Hiawatha, an Onondaga leader who communicates the Peacemaker's words to his own tribe and four others—the Cayuga, Mohawk, Seneca, and Oneida—living in what is now New York State and southeastern Canada. All are receptive except for a powerful Onondaga war leader, Tadadaho, whose evil character is symbolized by the snakes woven in his hair. Hiawatha finally secures Tadadaho's cooperation by offering him the chairmanship of the Grand Council, an assembly of 50 leaders representing each tribe the Peacemaker has conceived to resolve disputes amicably. The council is to meet in the centrally located territory of the Onondaga, gathering at what the Peacemaker calls the Great Tree of Peace.

The people of the confederacy organized by the Peacemaker and Hiawatha call themselves Haudenosaunee, meaning the "people of the longhouse." Several families live in harmony in this traditional dwelling, just as the tribes vow to live in peace within the same realm. Non-Indians will begin referring to the Haudenosaunee as the Iroquois and their powerful confederacy as the Iroquois League, or the Five Nations. (A sixth tribe, the Tuscarora, will later join the league; see entry for 1722.)

"Roots have spread out to form the Tree of Great Peace, one to the north, one to the east, one to the south, and one to the west. These are the Great White Roots and their nature is Peace and Strength.

"If any man or any nation of the Five Nations shall obey the laws of the Great Peace and shall make known to the statesmen of the League, they may trace back the roots to the Tree. If their minds are clean, and if they are obedient and promise to obey the wishes of the Council of the League, they shall be welcomed to take shelter beneath the Great Evergreen Tree."

-from the Iroquois Confederacy's Law of Great Peace

ca. 1430 to 1521

The Aztec become the primary power in Mesoamerica.

Clustered on a muddy island in Lake Texcoco—the site of present-day Mexico City (see entry for CA. 1325)—the Aztec people stage a series of wars on neighboring Indian groups in what is now the Valley of Mexico. By about 1440, they emerge as the dominant people of the region. In a long succession of military conquests, the ambitious, despotic Aztec rulers build up a vast empire. At its height, it comprises some 500 small states, spreading over 80,000 square miles throughout much of present-day Mexico.

Although absolute power rests with the ruler, the Aztec observe several layers of social rank—ranging from high-ranking nobles to middle-ranking merchants and artisans to low-ranking commoners. Individuals can rise or fall in position; warriors who distinguish themselves in battle are most frequently able to better their social positions.

The enormous empire is administered through a bureaucracy centered in Tenochtitlan, which is also the home of the Aztec ruler. The advanced Aztec farming technology, which employs man-made irrigation canals, helps sustain the population of this huge urban center. The residents of Tenochtitlán also rely on tributes of food and goods from conquered people in outlying areas. In addition, the conquests of Aztec warriors bring captives to the capital, who are killed in ever-growing numbers during religious ceremonies. The Aztec believe the sacrifices are necessary to nourish Huitzilopochtli, the god of the sun and of war (see entry for CA. 1325). Without the shedding of blood through these human sacrifices and ritual bloodletting, they fear that their world will come to an end. Their dire prophecies will come true with the arrival of Spanish conquistadores in their realm.

ca. 1450 to 1500

The Navajo (Dineh [Diné]) and Apache arrive in the Southwest.

Originally living in what is now southwestern Canada, the ancestors of the Navajo (Dineh) and Apache tribes migrate for reasons unknown to what is now the American Southwest. There, initially they remain hunters and gatherers who move from place to place in search of wild animals and plants. Their way of life contrasts with that of their new Pueblo neighbors—the descendants of the Anasazi (see entry for ca. 750 to 1400)—who live in villages and obtain most of their food through farming. The first contacts between the newcomers and the Pueblo were likely hostile with the Navajo and Apache raiding Pueblo villages for food and supplies. Some groups, however, may have developed a peaceful relationship based on trade.

By the 17th century, increased contact and intermarriage with the Pueblo will create a hybrid culture among the Navajo that blends their old ways with Pueblo farming techniques, ceremonies, and customs. The Apache, in contrast, will remain a mobile people with a culture focused on hunting, gathering, and raiding.

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